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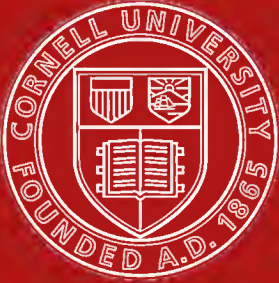
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THE PLAYS OF
MÆVONIUS

EX ANTIQUITATIS ANGIPORTIBUS

Praxiteles

The Marion Press
Jamaica Queensborough New York
1903



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Dramatis Personæ.

PRAXITELES, *a Sculptor.*

CALLIAS, *a Prince.*

DIOGENES, *the Cynic.*

SCAURUS, }
MEMMIUS, } *Athenians.*

CLEON, }
LUCIUS, } *in retinue of Callias.*

MENAS, *father of Eugia, a mason.*

EUGIA, *servant of Praxiteles.*

ALTHEA, *mother of Eugia.*

VELINA, *wife of Praxiteles.*

NYCTELIA, *friend of Eugia.*

MARCIA, *a great Lady.*

FLORA, *attendant on Marcia.*

LACO, *a male attendant.*

ACT 1.

Scene 1. Studio of Praxiteles.

Scene 2. A Quarry on Pentelicus.

ACT 2.

Scene 1. Studio of Praxiteles.

Scene 2. Banquet-room in House of Praxiteles.

ACT 3.

Scene 1. The Fountain of Salmacis.

Scene 2. Ante-room to Studio.

Scene 3. Home of Althea.

ACT 4.

Scene 1. Ante-room of Praxiteles.

Scene 2. Ante-room of Praxiteles. (Two days later.)

ACT 5.

Scene 1. Studio of Praxiteles.

Scene 2. The Fountain of Salmacis.

Scene 3. Studio of Praxiteles.

The Plays of Mæbonius

PRAXITELES

Act 1.—Scene 1.

The Studio of Praxiteles.

Busts, statues, clay models, drawings, etc. In the background a girl mixing clay.

Prax. [*Seated in a despondent attitude.*] I cannot work. And yet I rose this morn with every pulse athrob. While these dull laggards of the city here lay wanton in their beds, or dead in sleep, I hied me with quick step towards the shore. Then morn rose from the sea like one great pearl, gray orbéd and lustreless; and then, as if it had a heart, life's red suffused it all. Then to an opal did it turn, and blazing lay in shimmering iridescence. Such green, such red—the vine-leaf and the wine. Then rose the sun, and morn lay shining there a glistening diamond in sea's sapphire cup. One moment's breath, the long, white sea-sands o'er, brought me the smell of salt, of ooze, of brine—a smell of distance, borne from isles afar. I stripped and stood there naked, all alone, a living whiteness on the dead sea-sand. Then I forgot myself and sat me down—forgot myself, the shore, the world, the sea—full only of a vagrant, antique dream—an unshaped beauty I had never caught. I strove to mould it in the fickle sand—that dead, dull sand, which, being dry, cohered not—being wet, did flow. And then I spurned the sand and sprung to foot, and revelled in my naked, living self, rejoiced to think I was a man, not clay. Then did I wade out in the clear, blue deep, and sank my body underneath its waves till the sea, like a sapphire rim, did meet my lips. I breathed the ooze, the intoxicating brine. I stretched my arms out to the distant isles. I strained my eyes to heaven, to the horizon's verge, seeking some form which should condense to shape and show me nature's long lost, perfect type.

A land breeze came, the smell of thyme and bees, and drew me back to doubt, to work, to home.

Nurse enters by side door, carrying with difficulty a large child, much wrapped. Nurse stands doubtingly in background.

Nurse. Oh, master!

Prax. Well, what's amiss?

Nurse. The child—

Prax. [*Angrily.*] The child? Well, where's its mother? Am I to be nurse, father, mother, and all? Did I not make it once, or help to make it? Am I to mend or remake it every day? Nay! I have work to do—a character to imagine, a form to mould, a shape to carve, an ideal to reach, a thing to create, a statue which shall live. Go get thee to the nursery! Soothe it, amuse it, do something, and if it gets not better call me again—after awhile.

As Praxiteles turns away from nurse, Eugia approaches and bends sympathetically over the child. The two women stand silent for a few moments with heads close together.

Prax. [*Rising in anger.*] Get thee gone to the nursery, I say; and thou, Eugia, what business hast thou there? Go, mix thy clay. That lump was mixed long since—and badly mixed at that.

[*Exit nurse. Eugia returns to her work.*]

Enter the Prince Callias, young, handsome, in gay attire, with brilliant retinue.

Cal. How now, great sculptor, I see thy hands are clean.

Prax. Aye! yet not so my heart; for the sense of work undone, o'erdone, ill done, lies thick upon it.

Cal. But great works done pledge greater works to be. Hast thou lost faith? Then let me be thy hope. All Athens hails thee as a man grown great, and great men come from far to crown thy greater greatness. The strength of Athens' birth—the beauty of her dawn—all that shone once and sank again, lost in the past's deep gloom and dim forgetfulness, thou hast evoked and made to live. Those forms of old take shape beneath the cunning of thine hand and live once more in ivory and bronze.

Prax. In lifeless bronze; in marble cold as ice; in ivory that's dead—a whitened bone was never clothed with flesh.

Cal. Aye! but flesh rots, while marble still endures. When thou art dead, thou artist great and gray, I, thy young Prince, shall rule, a King, in Athens, and all these forms of beauty and of power shall grace our Parthenon.

Prax. And still be dead, as I and my stone tomb, and the cold pedestals whereon they stand.

Cal. Yet being dead shall speak. Shall beckon wanderers from all lands afar to see our country's fame.

I see them come! Barbarians from the North with shaggy skins, rough as the beasts from out their savage lands. They shall confront thy panoplied array and slink back beaten from these moveless shields—this valor carved in stone. They shall grow faint at all this naked loveliness, and, wending home, shall snatch their women from the pack and stress of life's dull, beast-like cares—shall touch them softly, lap them tenderly, and watch their work-worn forms grow more divine.

I see them come! Imbruted beings from the black, far South—with shapeless lips, with flattened face, with yard-long bosoms heaved their shoulders o'er to suckle infants hanging on their backs. They shall see all these perfect forms divine,—thy sinewy warriors, thy smooth, rounded maids,—and, falling back appalled at their own hideousness, shall worship us and be our slaves forever.

I see them come! Yellow and wizened, from the far, far East—a mummied, living race. They shall abhor their time-worn, shrunken selves, their histories vague, their heroes vaguer still, their non-existent gods, their infertile dust of a worn-out, used-up past. They shall see manliness erect and beauty prone, ready to breed new beauty and new life and keep an old world young. They shall abhor their very flesh and blood; shall open wide their lands to every throng from all the illimitable vast areas of earth's vast surfaces; shall open up their wombs to foreign seed, and graft the newest branch on the old world's oldest stock.

I see them come! Youthful and boisterous from the great, far West—eager to imitate and quick to learn—thirsty for knowledge, hungry for applause, greedy to see all, have all, be all. They shall drink us in, digest us, live us out, and build on our prone walls a later Greece.

Prax. On our prone walls but statues few shall stand. Greece shall be buried and Troy be a name. Dirt-heaps shall mark the spots where cities stood, and marble, bronze, and ivory shall lie with potherds and with clay. And you and I—

Cal. We shall be clay, I know, and clay shall lie till some new power doth seize and wrestle with us,—with stress and strain shall flow around and drink us in,—with throb and pulse shall beat and breathe us out, and blend with every atom of our long-dead dust some spark of new, strange fire.

Prax. So strange we shall not know it. So new it will not warm our older selves, nor wake to life what death froze long ago. I shall not see my works. I shall not know what men may praise them, nor what maidens faint in longing to be like. Why shall I work for such dim, distant time, in the far-off night of a yet unreckoned age?

Cal. Then work for these, my youthful followers here. Carve them some

Satyr, form half man, half beast. Thus may they learn how hath man risen from the brute he was, and, being man, how like a beast oft grows. Shape Aphrodite so her perfect limbs tempt women all to greater shapeliness. Form Eros so his pranks mixt maids and men may unmake maids and fill the world with men.

Prax. Nay! I will work for none of these. Not for example's sake, nor distant fame, nor thy sweet will, my Prince! There is a greater than them all—myself; a greater than myself—my work.

[*Exeunt Prince and retinue.*]

Prax. Bring me the clay, Eugia. Nay! Why so pale? Hast thou been mixing, tired, through this long talk?

Eug. Nay, master. I'm not tired.

Prax. White and in tears? Oh! now I see. I spoke thee harshly. 'Twas an unkind thing. But I have struck so oft on breasts of stone, I touch poor human hearts too hastily. If I do scratch yon bosom's polished curve a touch will set it right. Can I erase from yours the wound that I have made? Forgive me, Eugia. Nay, pity me. For I've lost faith in self and art and work—have lost my power to work. Urgence and praise, the public's loud applause, guerdon and promise and my King's command—they weigh me down like lead. Thy hand alone, thy clay-stained hand, which tells of faithful care, alone can help me on.

Oh! I have waved my hand in air, when young, and felt that with one sweep was beauty born. Now I dissect that beauty, merciless, and scorn the haste of youth. Had I thy care—thy patient, plodding care, thy strict devotion to that humble clay—I should make marble speak.

Give me the clay, Eugia. Let's begin.

[*Enter Nurse with child. Praxiteles turns angrily.*]

Prax. The child again!

Nurse. I cannot still him, master. He doth toss and moan and twist his shrunken limbs.

Prax. Then let him play. Thou coddlest him o'ermuch. He cannot use his arms, nor walk, nor grow, banded and swaddled like a babe just born.

Nurse. [*Uncovering the child.*] Play, and with limbs like that?

Prax. Well, who's to fault? I am no weakling, shriveled up and drawn. Fairer than fair his lazy mother is. Spotless and perfect, a luxuriant beast, she wiles her hours away. She hath so bathed in Styx no stone can bruise, no lance can scratch, no sting can pierce her. She sheds the woes of life from her sleek skin and keeps a bosom so soft no sword can cut it. And all her indolence breeds fire in me—fever to do, to work, to strive. And all her painlessness breeds pain in him. Since he was born how changed she grew. How from an unshaped girl she blos-

somed out and turned a form divine. Such grace of action, dignity of step, such peach-like color, such red, changeful blood! And as she suckled him she grew in health while he did suck in poison. See him there, the wizened, waxen, shrunken thing—with limbs all twisted and with joints awry, a parody on man. Go take him thence! How did I ever breed a thing so vile from all that grace and fairness?

[*Exeunt Nurse and child, and, after them, Praxiteles.*
Eugia sinks wearily on a sculptured capital.

Enter Althea, bearing a basket and an amphora of wine.

Eug. [*Rushing eagerly forward.*] O mother! mother! I'm so sick for home! Come, sit thee down, and tell me all thy news.

Alt. Nay! Sit thou first. [*Places her in the sculptor's chair and leans tenderly over her.*] Thou lookest pale, and thin, and worn.

Eug. Not of me, mother, but of thy news! Is my garden bright? Do the bees hum? Is father well? Doth the peacock stretch his tail over the wall? Doth the dog miss me and the cat lie ever on the sill? Do the girls and boys gambol by night around the well? O mother! I have seen so much of stone and clay I could kiss every green thing that groweth from the crack of a wall. And the figs, mother, are they turning yet? O mother! It is clay and stone all day, and when the night is come only stone arches to stroll under and stone paths to tread on.

Alt. Ah, dainty one! I knew 'twere safe to try thee. Thou lovest thy home too much to wander far or long. 'Tis a scant fare and a narrow cot we folk of the hills do use, but scant fare and narrow cot with a wide love are better than grand cities and cold hearts. But see, I have brought thee flowers from thy garden.

Eug. How bright, how sweet, how like my own dear home! But, mother, I find not cold hearts here.

Alt. Yet thou art pale and thin. I fear them all. They do not treat thee well. They're rough, unkind. They make thee work too long, too hard.

Eug. It was too hard, too long, when in the first few days I worked for gain alone. Not now, for work and love. O mother! I think them all most kind, most pitiful. There is an infant—nay, a boy, rather—who should be rollicking and strong, yet moans and sighs and shrinks and does not grow. And a nurse most patient who tendeth him all day. Never doth she scold nor weary, yet getteth never a good word. For my master is so proud of his marble and so shamed of his boy he hath ever a harsh word for him and her. And then there is his mother. So sweet, so fair, so like a full-blown rose. She smileth in disdain at my master's taunts. She turneth peevishly from the nurse's talk and the

child's crying; but oh, mother! I have heard her sob when alone as though her heart would break.

Alt. Come away, child, come away. This is no place for thee.

Eug. Nay! My master needs me, and I must knead his clay. Oh, he hath done such wonderful things, and hath great things to do. We must be patient, mother, he and I, for if he lack patience he will accomplish nothing; and I sit, oh, so still! and mix and bruise, but strain with all my soul to breathe my life, my form, my dream, my thought, into that soulless clay.

Alt. Come home, my child, come home! Thy father broodeth at eve now thou art gone. Thy fairest rose is dead. Thy lover wantoneth with other maids, and here thy thoughts grow wild.

Eug. I cannot leave him, mother, cannot come. There is great work to do, and he so sad. Only to-day our young Prince hath been here—argued, commanded, bargained, pled in vain. My master feels outworn, but I am young, and, knowing little, yet will find some way to fire his heart anew.

Alt. The young Prince here and all his reckless crew? Why! 'tis no place for thee. Thou needst thy home.

Eug. Were I so weak to need it I should flee home and myself—should flee in shame, for knowing myself unfit to make a home myself. Nay! Here I stay till I do rise in bronze or sink in clay.

Curtain.

Act 1. — Scene 2.

A Quarry on Pentelicus.

Praxiteles, Callias, Diogenes, officials and citizens of Athens, workmen, teamsters, and country folk. Praxiteles, Callias, and Diogenes stand together; others are scattered through the quarry.

Master Quarryman. [*With hammer and square, approaching Prax., etc.*]
May it please you, great Prince, the blocks lie ready for the master's choosing.

Praxiteles and others follow Quarryman to place where the marble blocks are ranged. The crowd, as it wanders through the quarry, gathers round the blocks, separating and congregating from time to time.

Cal. Ye men of Athens, greatness hath two sides. 'Tis a great thing to hold an office high and issue high commands; yet words were vain were there none fit to serve and prompt to obey. Behold us here, your Prince and lord—your King that yet may be; and here a simple man—an artisan in stone. And yet, perchance, this artisan in stone is greater than his Prince—transcends the State. Ages may come when all that's known of me may be some epic where 'tis briefly said, "In Callias' reign the greatest sculptor lived." I have commissioned this sculptor, and to this the State commissions me.

Diog. When did the State commission thee to spend its hard-earned pence on worthless stone? Are there not men in Greece who have no tubs to live in?

Cal. Not even tubs! Yet pity have I none for homeless wanderers who ask the State to give what they should earn. Hath the State need or use for beasts like that? Let them find dens, and, ravening, kill and prey, till, when the State sets bounties on their heads, they're killed and preyed upon. But for the widow and her helpless young, let the State shield them in her kindly arms and make its hearth their home. Thy tub, O cynic, is no humble home! 'Tis but the palace of thy too great pride, set wide for Greece to stare at.

There are none fit for tubs who do not know and feel the great attainments of a bounteous world—its hoarded luxuries, its hived sweets, its things to use and have. High on those walls, in ages yet to be, this marble of Praxiteles shall shine, a gleaming whiteness, towering o'er

our dust. There shall be stored, with usury of years, the hard-earned pence of Greece. Thence from that wealth shall flow a greater wealth—the wealth of cultured men, of women fair, of art's most high domain; the flood of all things which do make men meet for all that's great and good. And here, beneath, the ignoble dust shall lie of those who made their poverty their tomb.

Ye men of Athens, Greece hath warrant to coin its wealth in men. Yet must the coiner have his die and mould—his pattern's sample and art's deep impress. Those who do fashion out what men have been do shape what men shall be.

Welcome this sculptor! Seal the State's command! Raise from this stone new emulant to fame!

The throng shouts while Diogenes lays a laurel wreath upon a marble block.

Prax. Whence comes this block? 'Tis a goodly shape and a fair whiteness.

Quarryman. 'Tis from the old vein, and fair and even. And 'tis right soft.

Prax. Then 'twill work easily.

Diog. Aye! and will be finished ere thou hast time to plan what it should be, and, being done, will suck through every pore the grime, the smoke, the dust, the sweat of Athens. 'Twill turn like gold and taunt the poor with the semblance of wealth that is offered them—with the coldness and the hardness they have.

Prax. And this next one?

Quarryman. 'Tis from the lower level, and hard and fine, but lacketh some in whiteness.

Prax. Then will it take a high finish, yet have a softer lustre.

Diog. Aye! and a hard face and a rigid bosom like a young maid bred in riches. 'Twill smirk on Athens as if it said, "Come not too nigh! Thy place is lower."

Prax. And this one here?

Quarryman. 'Tis from an opening new and all untried. A most rare texture, white, and fine, and hard. Never a seam nor a flaw—only this touch of yellow in one corner here.

Prax. New and untried, like my dream's latest hope. Perchance there sleeps therein some creature yet unknown. When my hands play upon the yielding stone it seemeth then some frozen creature warmed beneath my touch and wakened into life. Where did she come from? Whence evoked? From that cold stone or my warm heart?

Diog. Hast thou forgot thy ways, thy means, thy helps? Do we not know the drudging care that furnishes thy clay? Do we not know the apprentice hands which roughen it to form? Do we not know thy workmen's tools which hack and crack and bring thy stone to shape? Do

we not know the living flesh which stands and bares its nudeness to thy gluttonous gaze and warms and tempts thee on?

Prax. Yet what are these but the bare facts which art must rest on? Women all are nude, yet is their nudeness flesh until the master-hand shall make that nude divine.

Into the mill the clay, the ooze, the slime. Into the lump an unshaped, plastic mass. Into the fingers cunning and warm blood. Blood which has flowed through channels of live flesh, and lay in fleshly urns and ripened there, and been poured out to other urns of flesh, carrying from each to each, since life's first dawn, a deepening flavor of earth's living whole. Blood which with odors strange doth thrill each chord of sense. Blood which with ethers rare doth fire the brain. Blood which doth pulse that brain beyond our frame, making it touch the unheard, the unseen, the unfelt, to throb in unison with the great unknown.

Diog. Why go so far—why strain so hard—to make an unknown thing within thyself touch unknown things without? Do not our bodies touch the cold, hard ground? Do not stones bruise our feet, beams wound our head? Doth not pain rack the sick and hunger's pang cramp the starved stomachs of our craving poor? Doth not the State—with edict, statute, law—compress the men of Greece and squeeze each in to its most rigid mould, to stiffen there—this shaped to purpose vile, and that for show—this for dishonor made, and that for pride?

Cal. Do not the stalls and stables of the King shelter proud steeds for kingly chariots fit, and duller brutes for wain and car and plow—even the slow oxen which shall drag yon stone, lumbering and creaking, down this rocky chasm, till it shall glide, undrawn, on highways smooth? And shall we stall the blood-cursed, spavined nag—dose him and feed him, curry him with care, swathe and foment him, bend above his straw, fire him with drugs, and set him ranging free to breed new spavins and thus add to his own a chain of useless lives? Nay! Leave him—drop him—let him lie and die. Let the cold cruelty of a pity great hold back compassion's still more cruel hand.

Lead out the King's own charger! Rub him well, till every vein do show—each hair do shine. Load him with gems and powder him with gold. Let the shrill trumpet blare—the drum beat loud. Let the gold spur bedeck his snowy flanks with jewels of life-blood. Then send him forth, a prancing, royal thing, bearing to fate's high mission Greece's King.

Quarryman. What hast thou chosen, master?

Prax. I choose this last, and in my choice doth lie a duty heavier than this mass of white. My Prince commands—the State commissions him and art doth summon me. What if 'twere better for the State to raise a hundred blood-warm forms than one stone-cold? What if in choosing me he choose amiss and use a hand too weak, a soul too small? For I

must sort and pick and range all forms of life, condemning this as base and that as poor—till I do fix on life's most perfect form for art's most high ideal.

And what if I do choose this block amiss—lured by its outer sheen and knowing not some deep-set fissure or some age-born flaw? O men of Athens! if the practiced hand doubts its own cunning and its sinews' skill,—if men, grown gray, with fear and trembling move, doubting the wisdom of each act and word, though it makes or mars one paltry life alone,—how shall the State hold back and shrink in dread lest its decrees do shape for time unknown some nation's faulty form?

We can but try. I choose this block as mine, seeing in its unshaped proneness things divine.

Workmen draw up an empty cart and load the stone upon it. Diogenes lays his laurel wreath on the chosen stone. Callias and Diogenes take hold of cross-bar of the cart's pole, while citizens and quarrymen fasten a rope to it and draw the car from the quarry. Praxiteles walks seriously behind the car.

Act 2.—Scene 1.

Studio of Praxiteles.

Eugia is seen arranging scrapers, chisels, mallets, and other tools upon a work-bench.

Enter Velina.

Vel. How likest thou thy new employ?

Eug. Well, madam, passing well, though 'tis all new and strange. I was a simple girl of lowly birth, and moved in simple ways. I saw the flowers bloom, the children grow, and thought things came of themselves, I knew not whence nor asked the reason why. Things were so simple—my clear eyes so young—there seemed no reason why. Now I begin to wonder and to learn, to find the simplest thing some mystery great, to dimly feel some power long ago made all things plastic and with stress and strain doth mix and mould forever. To see in form only the expressed pattern of a thought which hath not body nor form.

Vel. Would I had thought. I only knew too well how fair I was, and how men loved the fair. I knew not fairness was the outer sign of what men dreamed within.

Knowest thou thy master's likings—what his choice?

Eug. I can but guess. Sometimes he standeth like a lover on fire before yon wanton nymph. Sometimes he shivers by Diana there as if his veins were ice. Sometimes he walks for hours 'twixt those two forms—that Satyr hideous, that Apollo rare—as if he strove to learn how one had grown to the other. Sometimes he kneels o'er that young Eros as 'twere a living babe, and smiles and smiles as if his smiles would sun it out from bud to blossom—from flower on to fruit. Yet do I sometimes think his inmost thought doth rest on wounded Anteros.

Vel. On Anteros! I have not seen it. Where?

Eug. Hast thou not seen it? Why, he seeks it oft. Yes, I have seen him, in yon corner dim, crouching beside it with some quavering lamp and weeping bitter tears.

Vel. He seeks not his own child nor weepeth thus. Why, let me see it. [*They bend behind a pedestal.*] A wounded Anteros? I see no wound.

Eug. Nor I, indeed; yet hidden wound must be, else why these twisted limbs, this face of pain?

Vel. There is some meaning in it I do not know. Go! Leave me, girl, for I would be alone. [*Exit Eugia.*]

Velina at first strays through the studio, listlessly, despondently, and without purpose. Then begins, excitedly, to ransack it, opening chests and drawers, moving tools, searching under rugs and robes. At last sinks into the sculptor's chair.

Vel. [Bending to gaze in a polished shield which leans against a tripod.] I have not lost my fairness. Wherefore, then, doth he not think me fair? I am not old, nor seamed nor wrinkled by care's chiselling hand. I am not young—no unset slip of a thing, with a girl's crude shape unfixed to line and form. I have not balked half way 'twixt youth and age, missing one's dignity, the other's grace. If he loves beauty why doth he scorn me?

Rises and stands, in study, before the statue of a nude female.

This is most beautiful, a perfect form. Limbs which are shapely, lines and contours soft—all which might tempt a maid, much less a man, to sit and gaze for hours. And yet I know it not. Oh, I have seen on that same platform half a hundred stand, all perfect women, in nakedness divine, exacting from youth's fire and age's ice the meed of stintless praise.

I knew them not; they were to me but women. This had a crescent moon above its head, and he and art and they did therefore call "Diana!" And this one's hand a marble apple clutched, and so was hailed as Venus; crescents and apples being the outward sign 'twixt chastity and lust. Oh, could I seize on that lewd, mocking throng—those wanton models—I'd strip their robes until I found that she who shaped this beauty out; and, finding her, would strip her fair flesh from her hideous bones, leaving her lie, a horror!

And yet they all have gone, these beauties fair, leaving to him this Satyr, rough and strange, this Eros all ungrown.

Seats herself on a rough block of marble.

What will he make of this? 'Tis hard, 'tis cold, 'tis unresponsive, dead. Yet will his chisel cleave its obdurate mass,—his fingers' warmth bring answer to his touch,—his spirit bid it live. He shall evoke, from this dull, senseless block, what form and type he wills. Was I less worth than this—had less within—that he should leave me so? Why did he fashion these, with patience, care, and leave me all unwrought?

Turning to a pedestal, she draws the cloth aside and uncovers a mass of clay, showing only the rough outlines of a human head.

I was but clay, and should have felt his hand moulding my plastic soul through forms of sense to its spirit's outside show. Nature had

claimed me first and cast my clay in its old, oft-used mould of gracious youth, as if to say, "By this I set my seal on all this plastic, fine cohesiveness, and stamp this clay as one which a master-hand may shape to most high uses." He found me fair, and loved me fair, and left me fair, because I did not change to something else I knew not that he sought, and which, indeed, he sought not.

After knock at the door, to which Velina pays no attention, the Nurse enters, with child.

Nurse. Is my master here?

Vel. [*Angrily.*] Thy master? Why thy master? Is not the child my own? Why give him me, and get thee gone for good!

[*Exit Nurse.*]

Velina hugs the child passionately.

What shall we do, my child? What shall we do? He scorns me for my fairness and hates thee because thou art not fair. What shall we do?

She takes the leopard skin from the chair of Praxiteles, and, making a bed of it on the floor, in the background, lays the child upon it. Then again wanders from statue to statue, stopping longest and oftenest at the Satyr, the Eros, and the Anteros.

Those which were clothed in attributes of grace, finished and perfect, he hath discarded all. This Satyr is a man half made. The fire of lust burns in his face with fierce and shameless joy,—swells his coarse frame with an animal vigor fine,—thrills him to impose himself on some other life, and range, and breed, and change.

This Eros is an ungrown, wanton sprite, who soweth in the hearts of youth and maid great nature's quickening seed. Life's all unsatisfied with beings made, and shapes new things to be. This Anteros I know not. Methinks in this he speaks his meaning out, yet hides it from our sense. 'Tis something writhes because the thing it is, yet struggles for what it is not. I wonder were we perfect, one and all, we would be patient with our finished selves? When his work's done 'tis done and it is naught;—'tis the working to do it is great.

Oh, my poor child! Would we could sleep and wake in new-made forms which charmed and satisfied.

Velina lies down beside the child, whom she takes in her arms. The studio darkens with the twilight, and curtain falls.

Act 2.—Scene 2.

Banquet-room in House of Praxiteles.

Curtain rises showing Praxiteles and his male guests at a banquet. Female dancers and musicians at the side.

Memmius. I thought we were bid here for purpose sage, and not for wine alone.

Scaurus. Aye! But all purposes are drowned in wine, and wake, when poured, like flies.

Mem. Then let us spread them on the table here and see what light shall bid them first to crawl. Here is the red light of the quickening wine,—there is the glow our artist's genius sheds,—there the cold wisdom of the monied State,—and soon our Prince shall come and outshine all with his full light of culture.

Scau. Aye! and after him will come the cynic, who doth dog his step and cast deep gloom o'er all.

Prax. I am commissioned by my Prince and State, yet feel no call from art. The stone whose coldness I am bid to wake is warmer than my soul. Largess and duty are like leaden weights which hold my genius down. I have had marshaled out each work of old, have heard it crowned with praise, and then been told I must surpass them all—outdo myself, and make perfection live. Were I but poor and free, the work my own, my brain would tingle, all my veins would throb, and the work spring finished to my waiting hand. Now I stand dumbly here and ask what Greece would have.

Mem. Greece would have something that she hath not yet, yet knoweth not what she'd have. There is no niche that's vacant of a god; there is no power but that it hath a shrine.

Scau. But there's many a god lacks worshippers, and many a shrine that hath no power.

Diog. [From the doorway.] Then let the people worship themselves and the State find its power at their shrine.

Prax. And am I to make a statue of the people? What shall it be? A strong man kneeling, like Narcissus at a pool, to worship his own image, or a fair maid hiding her face at the beauty of her own nakedness?

Diog. Or a limping boy?

Scau. Or a blind man with arms outstretched and groping for his way?

Mem. Or a prisoner straining to burst his bonds?

Prax. Then it is not perfection Greece would have!

Diog. No! But something, rather, that shall make Greece see how all deformed she is,—how much she lacks,—how lame and halt and young!

Scau. Or that she knoweth her own ignorance and feeleth for the safer road.

Mem. Or that she feels herself in shackling bands of faiths worn out, traditions dead, and cumbrous chains of law.

Prax. Hath art no beauty, then? Must she ever embody some wise saw or old proverb, and stand like a moral in stone with its ticket on, saying that I am, and so I teach, and this I mean? Are fair women like that? Do men look once and understand, or do they gaze forever, seeking the unknown grace, the hidden meaning which shapes this beauty out? Are men like that—great men? Do we not wonder ever at their greatness and reverence a dignity and power whose depth we cannot gauge? Am I to shape some figure whose meaning one can know at a glance, as they know Mars by his helmet and Jove by his thunderbolt?

Enter Callias (the Prince) and his train.

Cal. Are we too late, fair sirs? When the wine's out the wisdom's out, 'tis said.

Diog. But no wisdom here; only carping, criticism, and care,—suggestions many and decisions few,—every one ready to kneel and no one knowing what to kneel at.

Cal. [*Dipping a rose in wine and sprinkling the female musicians.*] Not knowing where to kneel with all this beauty here? Critics of arms like these and shoulders fair? Carping at rose-red lips and eyes like heaven? Suggestions as to how niches shall be filled, when here are living statues all ready to step in?

Hath Greece grown old before its time? Have you old greybeards sworn to bury youth and joy? Is the new statue to be an old and frosty content? Nay! It shall be a lusty fire! Something to do what youth ever doth with youth—tempt and be tempted?—To fall? To sink in shame?—Not so, forsooth! But to shrink in fearsome curiousness, to crave with longing fierce, to burn with passion, to tremble with desire, to struggle for possession, to glow with pride at the last barrier leaped, the last scruple overcome, at tardy justice to a starved desire, at the final union of one's body to one's soul, of both to the loving and the loved!

Were Greece and the world left to old age and the ancients, Greece would be dead ere now. The new statue shall be a woman, naked,

beautiful, and young, tempting the world to breed, through beauty, new beauty and new grace.

Prax. Nay! It shall be neither man nor woman; something greater than either—both!

Cal. What! An hermaphrodite?

Diog. An unknown monster?

Mem. A sexual paradox?

Scau. A human curiosity?

Prax. Yes! All and none. No monster, but the world's most perfect type. No paradox, but the blending of two opposites to make one like. No curiosity, but the frame in which curiosity dies and perpetual satisfaction lives. It is men and women who are monsters, paradoxes, curiosities. The first being was neither man nor woman. Nature, in some wild freak, did make them twain she erst created one, and men and women ever since have cultured the two varieties, picking out ever the manliest man, the womanliest woman, to push each farthest away from the old, ancestral type. Hath this one a gray and stubby beard? Then shall that one have yard-long tresses of golden silk. Doth this one bulge and swell with misplaced, exaggerated sinews? Then shall that one be all soft curves like the bendings of a floating swan. Doth this one battle with the elements and fight with beast and man? Then shall this one lap herself safely in luxurious ease, till she tire of the thing she is. Then shall both, weary of themselves, see in the other their heart's, their blood's desire, and, madly fierce each to possess the other, shall blend their beings in a hot caress—crazy to make two one, while nature laughs and turns those two to three.

Cal. So, then, instead of nature's perfect form—some lovely virgin, some Adonis fair—you would set up some strange and bestial shape, to kindle in the veins of lustful youth lust's most unnatural fires?

Prax. Have I not said that nature's highest type ignored the difference wide 'twixt sex and sex, blending two natures in one perfect whole? A bestial shape! Why, this shall be so pure none will suspect its sex—none feel their own.

Nay! Doubt not, fear not; art hath spoken at last. My heart's athrob, my fingers yearn for work. Oh, ye shall see how the clay shall body thought! Ye shall witness the cold marble grow to a breathing life! Ye shall see me ransack Greece for forms of flesh—forms which have borrowed from ancestries old, this one a shell-like ear or instep high, this one a dimple, that a shoulder's curve,—each with some little gift of fleshly form, the which, conjoined, shall unite in one all the bold outlines of earth's perfect man, all the sweet softness of earth's fairest maid, all shapes of sense, all growth of soul within, till those who look shall in the body see only the form of unseen things that be.

Enter the Master Quarryman, reeling.

Cal. Why, how now, master; what's thy errand?

Scau. If his head be no steadier than his heels 'tis a crooked message he brings.

Mem. Pass him the flagon. Perhaps the new fumes will drive out the old.

Quarryman drinks.

Cal. Well, what's thy word?

Quarryman. We have drawn the block to the door.

Prax. Aye! and at a most unfit time. Why so belated?

Quarryman. 'Twas a heavy block and a rough road, and we drank to thy success at every vineyard on the way.

Prax. And so get here after dark, to burst in, unbid, on the feasts and discussions of thy betters. Go, leave the wain at the door and come again to-morrow.

Quarryman. But my oxen must be at the quarry by daylight, and the wain with them.

Prax. Then back up thy cart to the double door of my studio. Dump the block in and leave it. Are we to leave wine and music and beauty and the planning of perfect works for servile cares like thine? Go! Rid thee of thy load! Begone!—Play, girls, play! Dance, pretty ones, dance! Drink, friends, drink!

The girls play a low, soft tune—the dancers move to a slow measure—Praxiteles bustles about the table passing goblets and flagons, and scattering roses among the guests. Then, suddenly, the crash of a great fall, and a woman's agonizing cry. The dancers and musicians huddle in a corner, the guests spring from the banquet-table, Callias and Praxiteles seize torches, fling open the doors of the banquet-room, and disclose a corner of the studio, in which they disappear.

Prax. [*Rushing back, in horror.*] Dead! Dead! Wife and child, at one blow, crushed out of semblance by yon senseless stone!

Curtain.

Act 3.—Scene 1.

The Fountain of Salmacis.

A Public Square in Athens, with sculptured water-basin. Girls with water-jars. Street throng. The sunlight falls across square, leaving half in shadow, half in sun. The tub of Diogenes stands against the wall of a building in the shade.

Diog. [*Seated in his tub.*] Here, you girls! The cynic hath a question to ask. Why is it ye seek this square so much?

Girl. To draw water for our mothers.

Diog. No; 'tis to draw gossip for yourselves. And why is it so many youths do saunter through the square?

Girl. 'Tis on their road to the Gymnasium.

Diog. 'Tis five squares off their road to the Gymnasium—'tis on the road to you. But why, girls, do they come to you?

Girl. 'Tis a sorry youth will not come to a fair maid.

Diog. But when one youth hath passed why wait ye for another?

Girl. One's looking wears not all the fairness off.

Diog. [*Rises, turns his tub bottom up, and stands upon it.*] Come hither; listen! [*A throng gathers round him.*] Ye are wanton gossips, come here to be seen of men. Ye show them a white shoulder when they turn the corner and a gray mantle when they near the font. Ye revel in your own charms in the moon's loneliness and your chamber's solitude, and hide your beauty from the world which owns it. Aye! owns it, I say, though 'tis cheated of its dues. But there was a time when the first-comer claimed it and each maiden paid her due. What are ye good for? To wait on your mothers; to serve your husbands? Ye cheat the one and betray the other, and most of all him whom ye tempt to wrong your husbands, sadden your mothers, and debauch yourselves. For ye tempt with a beauty ye show by halves, with a joy ye grudge to the getter, with a pleasure whose sting—remorse—ye hide. Why not be honest? Ye are soulless, senseless things, having one little gift, a shapeless form, the which in shame ye hide.

Now Greece hath need of ye. Not that Greece needeth girls or men; for Greece hath so many that food faileth them, and roofs and firesides there are none. Yet these beings overmuch are but a surplusage of life, a common type that rots and dies from too scant food and shelter.

But Greece, whose vaults are full o'ermuch with silver drachmas, hath none to spare for tiles and cloth and bread. She saves it all to fee some sculptor who, from senseless stone, shall shape a nondescript which needs no robes—which can endure the summer's heat, the winter's blast, and stand up naked on the outer walls; which needs no food, and which, most strange of all, lacketh those organs by which senseless brutes breed other brutes with appetites and pains. This stony form must be a model type, blending all forms of comeliness in one.

Girl. Like me?

Another girl. Or me?

Diog. Nay! I know not. Our wiser sculptor saith Nature, like Greece, most parsimonious is, giving a dimple here and there a mole, but fulsome gifts to none.

Callias and Praxiteles approach from opposite side of square.

There comes the sculptor, there your gracious Prince. Ye that have gifts for Greece produce them now.

Cal. Why, how now, cynic, dost thou preach treason on the public square?

Diog. Nay! but loyalty to Greece. I do instruct these maids and wives that as their men do give their bodies to the hungry State for work and war, for wound and scar, they do but owe the State their charms as well.

Cal. How shall their beauty supplement the State?

Diog. Ask your great sculptor there! Doth he not know each hired model's oft-repeated curve? Doth he not see in every sculptured form a hireling's reflex—something made, not grown? Shall Greece be modeled from a wanton drab, from some smooth model wanting thought and brain, from some patrician proud of her cold self? Nay! From some maiden through whose veins unknown courses the unmixed blood of Greece's prime; some scion of the people, poor as they, yet rich with Greece's fairness. Under these mantles coarse, these gowns of gray, some sculptured soul is closely hidden away.

Prax. Aye! But to find it—to find it! Oh, if I could but find the model of my dream! But she must be a paragon. I would give my right hand—but nay, that would spite art, Greece, and myself—I would give the best my right hand hath ever done. Aye, if among these maids of Greece I can find my long-sought ideal,—if she will pose to me while I to art,—if my Prince approve the work, if the people applaud, if the State accept,—and last, most hard of all, if mine own self do crown the doing,—then will I give that she her own free choice; she shall pick out my studio's best. Nay! I will choose with a true artist's hand and give the best that is.

Diog. Most liberal indeed—in seeming. 'Tis a hard bargain thou drivest. Must she be a maid?

Prax. If she be perfect, she shall be made in stone e'en though no maid in flesh.

Cal. Aye! And if the sculptor find such an one — one whom the people, the State, the Prince approve, one whom art and he do both select as fitted to show forth and typify our future's high ideal — I will give her the best I have — myself. She who, being perfect, doth perfection hide, shall mother Kings to be and be my bride.

Curtain.

Act 3. — Scene 2.

Ante-room to Studio.

Callias and retinue, Diogenes, and throng of girls and women.

Enter Eugia from the Studio.

Lucius. I prithee, good Eugia, speak for me. Thy master will be mazed with all this beauty. Why, 'tis not the public square alone, nor yet even Athens; 'tis all Greece herself. Tell him I write a good fair hand, and am most modest. He cannot bear in mind not two in twenty of such varied charms. Let me, then, be his scrivener. I will sit one side the screen, and thou from on the other shall call forth what beauties I must write.

Cleon. Tell him to bid me in. I am not modest at all. But I am a fair measurer of waists and a right skillful spanner of wrists and ankles.

Diog. Aye! And neither of ye could tell a soul from a cheese-cake.

First Woman. Why doth he keep us waiting so long? She is no beauty that detains him now—a sleek, fat tabby-cat with ne'er a curve.

Second Woman. Why wait, then? Shove thy thin form like a skeleton-key through the keyhole, and so defy the usher.

Diog. Peace, women! It is neither fatness nor leanness art demands, but soul.

Third Woman. Then what doth he seek fair bodies for? There's more soul in those great saucer-eyes of that young, half-starved, unshaped chit of a thing than in all yon wanton hussies.

Diog. Aye! Those are the windows warm with the glow of the seething soul within. If art could fashion eyes in stone, and give their depth, their change, their color, then all were well and art were well. That is, if art were satisfied with souls at work and needed not the perfect work of souls.

Third Woman. Whose soul is it he wants, and what kind of a soul?

Diog. Not mine, woman, nor thine. No soul born of yesterday—none of this generation. There be some here born of Greek bodies into whom the soul of Greece did never enter. There be nobles here whose breeding place was the dunghill. There be commoners here whose blood runs pure from unknown kings of old. Have ye not read in Eastern

writ how that in early time the sons of God saw that the maids of earth were fair and took them wives? Think ye they came as gods to fright those earthly maids? Nay, but as bashful youths, with honest brows,—as vigorous men, with strength's protecting arm,—as widowed seniors, tenderer for their loss. These are the sons of God whose virtues shine in traits inherited and gifts divine.

While these three have been talking to Diogenes, Eugia has allowed some to depart from and others to enter in the Studio.

Eug. My master'll see no more.

Girl. What! Has he chosen, then? I could show him something—

Cleon. Show it to me and I'll do better for thee than he will; for, if thou please him, he will make thee stone and cold; while I, if thou please me, will make thee good warm flesh.

Luc. Come, fair ones, the master is surfeited with so much warm food. Let us here catalogue your charms and serve up coldly what he shall warmly choose with a greater relish because we do arrange the board.

Cal. They do say that he who drinks too long, too much, too oft, and of too many vintages, cannot at last tell Chian wine from gall. Perchance 'tis so with beauty. Here comes our sculptor dazed with all this grace.

As Praxiteles enters from the Studio the throng of women rush upon and circle round him with excitement.

Curtain.

Act 3.—Scene 3.

Home of Althea.

Evening. An humble room. Spinning-wheel and distaff in one corner. A rude loom. Rich female garments hanging and lying on the plain furniture. Althea alone, sewing.

Alt. My sight is dim with age—my eyes are tired—my fingers tremble. But my sight would have been keen enough once, and my eyes fresh, had I seen stuffs like these and dreamed my hands should finger them. A little more and the work will all be done, but I will keep on and on till my good man comes home. He shall not enter, weary from his toil, and find me waiting, idle.

Enter Menas, in soiled clothes, carrying a mason's hammer and a square.

Menas. How now, dear wife? Whence cometh all this splendor? These cloths of gold, these tissues of the East, seem as unmeet for our poor fittings here as do those gorgeous housings which barbarian hands spread over mules and camels.

Alt. I know not whence they come nor whose they are. A servant brought them here. She said her mistress, some great dame of state, had heard my hands were skillful. Her bungling slaves only made darns more rough and rents more large. She'd missed some feast because they were not ready. Another feast betides and she's in fear. She promised me a goodly sum if I should have them perfect ere two more suns had set.

Menas. And canst thou do it?

Alt. 'Tis already done, but she shall wait lest she may measure my skill by the time it takes to use it. But thou, good man, how farest it with thee? Didst thou get thy place on the State's last work? Art thou to oversee the men who lay the base for our great sculptor's statue!

Menas. Not so. There were younger men before me; and, not to lose my day, I took the work that offered. Soter, the mortar-mixer, hath just married and taken his young wife home to his own mother's house, and so's in haste to build. Better new-married peace in a hut on the hill than a young wife's temper ruined and reverence for an old mother lost.

Alt. It grieves me sore to see thy age and skill scorned for the work of green and tactless youth.

Menas. All that they see is age; the skill shows not. 'Tis a great thing to build for a great State. I might be proud to think I'd laid the base for one of Greece's marvels. But I shall square this hut as 'twere the King's own palace. I'll sink its base-stones deep, I'll lay its lintel level, I'll spread its hearth so true, so close, there shall not gape a crack not even for a cricket to hide in. I'll make my work so just, so true, that they who live therein shall daily learn life's greatest lesson—honesty to self.

Alt. Oh, husband! Thou'rt too true and good for a world so false and wicked.

Menas. Perchance, dear wife; that is, if truth and good find their reward in us to-day. When young we recked not all the need and worth of truth and goodness. Age hath one merit: When the body's eyes grow dim the soul's eyes grow more clear. We easier see what it is great to live for. That which we see our children yet may do.

Alt. And was there naught new in the city?

Menas. Aye! All the town's agog with our great sculptor's model. The cynic from his tub hath made a speech, bitter with railing and soaked with paradox. He hath set the city wild. The statuary hath promised his greatest work to her that shall prove a perfect model, and the Prince hath pledged himself that if she prove perfect she shall be his bride. All the beldames of the backstreets have set to painting their faces, and the fishwives from the market are anointing themselves with fish-oil to take off the smell of fish.

Alt. And hath this clamor reached the sculptor's house? Think thee! our daughter's there, and she so innocent and young; for there will be schemes and strategy, even foul play, perchance.

Menas. Aye! They have already begun. Young maids and old women are beseeching her with gauds and trinkets that she let them privily in to show their beauty unawares; and gay gallants are beseeching her with good broad pieces of gold that they may be let in still more privily to feast their surreptitious gaze on unsuspecting charms.

Alt. Gay gallants—maids and old women—trinkets and gold-pieces! Why, what are all these? Why should not Eugia herself—

Menas. Why should not Eugia what?

Alt. 'Tis naught. Only a mother's fancy; only a fond mother's wild thought. 'Twas naught; thou needst not know.

Menas. Aye, but I do know! What thy woman's wit jumpest at my man's slowness can plod to in time. Why should not Eugia herself out-plan the planners and carry off the prizes herself? But, prithee, tell me, wife, if Eugia did carry off the prizes what should we do with a Prince?

Alt. We would divert our blood through the body of our daughter into the veins of Kings.

Menas. And what would we do with the great work—a statue?

Alt. If the worst come to the worst thou couldst crack it up in pieces for the lime-kiln, that its mortar might build huts for the King's grandchildren, who, mostlike, will be exiles from the throne.

Enter Eugia.

Menas. Why, here's our daughter now! Is aught amiss?

Eug. Nay, father, all is well. Only 'tis so long since I saw thee. When I came last thou wast not here. And I was so homesick and so weary.

First it was all clay and stone, and only the sculptor and I in that great studio all the livelong day. Some days he scarce did speak a word, but he did mould and I did mix all day. Now 'tis neither mixing nor moulding; 'tis people, people, all day long. They throng about the gate, they stare at the house from the street corners as if some wonder lived there, they besiege the doorway, they steal in unnoticed by unwatched doors, they waylay every one who goeth out of the house. Oh, I am so sick of them all, and he and I do never get, one with the other, a word alone.

Alt. I'm glad thou'rt come.

Eug. [*Kneeling by her mother and laying her head on her shoulder.*] And I am gladder. Oh, I need my home and those who love me. The great world's all too great for those who were born little. I never felt it here. Our home's so small, our ways so plain, our folk so level. But there they're ranked in different stations all, each looking down on each and all on me.

When we were there alone I felt not so. I knew that he was great, yea, passing great, and so did justly hold the place his greatness earned. I knew that I was small and knew my place; and circled round him, shining with his light, as doth the moon with its reflected gleam keep its true distance from th' illuming earth. Now 'tis as if some comet strange and wild hath rushed between us, dragging in its wake a swarm of stinging stars.

Enter Nyctelia, dancing gayly, in careless attire and crowned with vine leaves.
The two girls rush into each other's arms.

Eug. Oh, thou art welcome, welcome! I longed for home so much, and coming now, thought in these parents, dear and old and gray, the sweetest things earth held. But now I know that youth doth most need youth.

Nyct. Aye, and the work of youth. See, I am worn with toil, yet dance me home. My hands are stained, my mantle's torn, my robe's awry. I have been picking grapes the whole day long, and while I picked I laughed, and, when I rested, romped. Feel how my heart beats—see

how red my cheeks! Oh, I did run so fast, though not in fear, but that he would not catch me.

Eug. I would I had been with thee.

Nyct. Then come to-morrow. Thy lips look dull, thy cheek's the color of clay, thy hand like marble. Come, thou shalt bear a pannier on thy head, and, reaching too low, the youths shall steal the cherries from thy lips. Leave thy staid sculptor with his statues cold, and live where shape is warm. We'll gambol through the vineyards, dance and sing, and make our work our play.

Eug. To-morrow? I cannot come.

Nyct. Is there more clay to grind?

Eug. 'Tis the last day for choosing. He hath not found his model yet. I must be there to watch; perchance my sense may find one perfect whom he sendeth thence.

Menas. Come, dear wife, put up these garments. Thou sayest they're done, but perchance thou deceivest us in kindness, and when all's abed you'll burn yon flickering sconce and burn your life out in the night's late work. Come, get needles for these giddy young things and see if the one can sew as skillfully as she can mix and the other mend as quickly as she can break.

Eug. If my mother will trust me I will sew.

Nyct. And I will not trust myself nor thee. Thy joints are stiff with kneading clay and my fingers are red with the grape.

Alt. In truth the work is done, but were it not there rests one day before the servant call.

Eug. Why, whose are they, mother?

Alt. The robes of some great dame, I know not who. Fold them away and lay them in this chest. Thus shall some day their present owner rest.

Eugia and Nyctelia fold up the garments and pack them in a chest, displaying and admiring them as they do so.

Menas. Come, wife, we have both worked and waited long; let us away and get our meal.

Nyct. Thou sayest they will not call ere sundown of to-morrow?

Alt. Aye! Not till then.

[*Exeunt Althea and Menas.*]

Nyct. They're all but in, Eugia. Leave me now; go help thy mother.

[*Exit Eugia.*]

Nyctelia goes to outer door and brings in the grape pannier. She then selects two sets of garments from the chest and lays them in the pannier. Althea enters suddenly and detects her.

Alt. Why, Nyctelia, what doest thou? Wilt thou pick grapes to-morrow in a royal robe, or dost thou know and take them to their owner?

Nyct. Nay, godmother! 'Twas but sport, a jest. I did but borrow them for one short day.

Alt. One day?

Nyct. Canst thou not guess?

Alt. Eugia!

Nyct. Aye, Eugia! Our thought's the same. The sculptor gave her liberty this night; we'll steal it for her to-morrow. Yes, if she do but act her part, freedom her whole life long. We will persuade her. I'll bid her sleep this night with me; you shall consent and urge. Then I will tease her all the livelong night, and thou to-morrow shall early take her place and make excuse she's sick and cannot come. Is it a plot—agreed?

Alt. Aye! Be it so. [*Exit Altbea. Nyctelia shuts the chest and carries the pannier outside the door.*]

Enter Eugia.

Eug. What! The lid shut and all things packed away? O Nyctelia, I have lived so long mid figures nude that clothing lost its worth. Yet, passing strange, now I'm so eager for these beauteous things I cannot say them nay. I'm like a girl taking her first peep at her bridal robes. Let me have one look more.

Nyctelia seats herself on the chest.

Nyct. What folly's this? When all female Athens is aching to strip itself before one man that he may show it stripped forever, thou, like a girl, art hankering for long gowns.

Eug. Show me the robes, I say!

Nyct. Wouldst thou wear them?

Eug. Oh, if I might, but once!

Nyct. Hast thou the courage?

Eug. If I looked again I might have.

Nyct. Well, look then.

Eugia opens the chest.

Eug. Why, Nyctelia, thou hast deranged them all. The one I wanted lay right here atop. [*Fumbles in the chest.*] Why, 'tis gone—two are gone—I know them well!

Nyct. Go to the door, quick! Some one has stolen in on us and borne off the robes. They can't be far.

Eugia runs to the door and returns dragging in the pannier.

Come here, silly. Wilt thou spoil all with thy truthfulness, or wilt thou be a queen?

Eug. A queen!

Nyct. Aye, if thou wilt do as thou art bid. Thy mother and I are agreed. To-night thou sleepest with me and takest thy rest; who with the next—why, heaven alone knows best.

Curtain.

Act 4.—Scene 1.

Ante-room of Praxiteles.

Praxiteles and Callias.

Cal. Well, master, 'tis the last day. If the gods send thee not better luck Athens shall lack a goddess. A goddess, say I? Why, what shall we call it—the sexless thing?

Prax. The god of gods! Divinities have sex. All those great beings which the race of men has shaped by its own image and then hath christened gods—all these have sex. But canst thou dream the real and absolute is aught but one, and, being one, doth not combine in one more perfect form the attributes of both?

Cal. Aye! But thy summons hath been so conceived it brings monstrosities from every clime. Those most divergent from the natural type commend themselves as perfect.

Prax. All these divergencies were nature's freak. Each aberration from the pristine mould was hailed as beauty and was pushed too far. I seek no monster, but some perfect form having the female grace, the strength of man, unconscious of its sex.

Cal. Thou seekest too much. Grant thou thy dream were true. Grant the first human were a two-sexed thing. Grant that our strife and our most high ideal were to forget the satyr in us born—the wanton in us bred. Now we are human—human youths and men who must wed human maids and make them wives, and make them turn to mothers. Come, master, it is not luck thou needest, but a less critical mind. Make me thy chooser, and by all the gods and goddesses—by Venus the fair and Diana the chaste—I will pick thee out a beauty who shall be Aphrodite and Apollo in one; that is, if thou takest my word for it.

Althea opens the door.

Prax. Has she come?

Alt. Who, master?

Prax. Who? Why, thy daughter! Thou saidst she did but lie too late abed. 'Tis the first time she hath been gone all night. She hath ever been here in the morning. And now 'tis late and she has not come, and the work and the studio's all awry.

Alt. She seemed weak and faint, master. I feared when she bade me fill her place she was not well and I should suit thee ill.

Prax. Nay, thou doest well enough.

Alt. But she is come, Sir.

Prax. What, thy daughter?

Alt. Nay, but the model thou expectest. Her maid did bid me say she whom thou long hast waited now doth wait.

Prax. Is she fair?

Alt. The maid? Yes, passing fair.

Prax. Nay, woman, the mistress.

Alt. I cannot tell, she is so closely veiled. But she steppeth royally and walketh like a queen.

Prax. Show her in—alone.

Alt. Nay, but she will not enter alone. She will keep her maid by her.

Cal. Well, let them in. Prithee, good sculptor, be reasonable. If the maid have a fair face and the mistress a fair form, take thou thine one and grudge me not the leavings.

Prax. Well, show them in.

Enter two ladies, richly dressed, one with uncovered face, and one heavily veiled and her figure covered. They bow to Callias.

Cal. There stands the sculptor, most fair dames. I am no artist great—only an humble servitor of art.

Maid. Haunting art's studio with shrewd designs on nature?

Cal. Say, rather, waiting to compare nature with art. Wilt thou help me?

Maid. Prithee, I came to serve my mistress, not to find a master.

Prax. [*To Mistress.*] Thy walk is excellent, thy gait serene. Thy carriage speaks a shapely form. Thy head's well set. But I must see thy face.

Mistress. My face! Thou seest faces every day. Take thy pick of the fairest, but leave me free.

Prax. But I must see thy face if I mould or carve.

Mistress. Then thou carvest not me. I am not eager. 'Twas not for fame I sought. I would be all unknown.

Prax. Dost thou know how to pose?

Mistress. I am no model. I can be my own plain self alone.

Prax. Why, I must have a face.

Mistress. Then fancy that one [*pointing to maid*] on my shoulders. Canst thou find a prettier? [*Mistress turns her head disdainfully.*]

Cal. Nay, never—forgive me, lady, except thine. [*Maid turns away disdainfully and makes a moult at him.*] Forgive me, lady, no, never! What shall I say? Ah! here's the truth: I have never seen greater beauty than this, for thy face is covered.

Both salute him.

Prax. Thou speakest well, fair dame, and steppest well, but so did many who have failed in all. Hast thou no further proof?

Mistress. If thy platform is ready then I am ready, too.

Prax. But if all were to enter there who simply claimed, the day and studio would be all too full.

Mistress signals the maid, who winds her mistress's veil about her head and then removes the mantle, disclosing arms bare to the shoulder and uncovered shoulders.

Mistress. I am ready.

Prax. I, too, am ready now.

Praxiteles, Mistress, and maid walk toward the door of Studio. Callias hurries after them and seizes the maid's hand.

Cal. Nay, thou'rt not needed there. I need thee here.

Maid. When thou art my master I'll obey thee. That is, if I teach thee not first to obey me. But now I'll serve—my mistress.

Makes a pretty mouth at him and disappears in the Studio. Callias stands disconsolate at the door of Studio, which after a while opens, showing the saucy face of the maid.

Maid. What! Peeping! Fie, for shame. Wait, and I'll come anon.

Callias seats himself in a dejected attitude, but springs to his feet as the maid reappears.

Cal. Now, pretty one, tell me thy tale. Who is thy mistress, and what art thou?

Maid. Thou hast said it; she is my mistress, and I her maid.

Cal. I thought she was some Princess, come from far, and thou her maid of honor.

Maid. Thou hast said it; so are we. Now, who art thou?

Cal. I am the Prince.

Maid. I thought so—the prince of revelers.

Cal. Nay! Believest thou not me?

Maid. What! Believest thou me? Art thou so simple? Just for a pretty face to believe a pretty tale? Canst thou not see we are not dames of state? Just two wild girls, that's all, who've donned their betters' robes to masquerade in.

Cal. I do believe thou art no maid at all, but some great unknown Princess, and she, thy maid, doth pass herself for thee.

Maid. Art thou so keen? Then I am keener still. I do believe thou art no Prince at all, but common blood like me. Oh, thou believest not! Why, see my hands, stained with the blood of grapes I pluck for hire.

Cal. So she's thy mistress, then. She hath a comely arm and neck most fair. Is her bust shapely?

Maid. Aye, her foot is a right shapely one, and her busk fits it right well.

Cal. I said bust, not busk. Is her bust shapely?

Maid. Her bust? Why, yes, I've heard her mother say that when she was an infant, scarcely weaned, and took her bath, buried in perfumed water to her waist, her little back was like an arrow straight, her breast like Cupid's own.

Cal. Nay, nay! Thou beatest about the bush.

Maid. And thou thrustest thy hands in it to steal nests under my keeping. If my lady hide her charms from thee, shall I describe them? Get thee gone for a wanton! Why thinkest thou she hath great charms?

Cal. Have I not said that which I saw was comely.

Maid. And so must think that comelier which thou sawest not? What! Shall I spend my time dilating on another's charms when thou sayest not a word of mine own?

Cal. Have I not said thou hast a pretty face?

Maid. And is that all thou carest for?

Cal. Nay, by my troth! And now I swear that she who showed so much did show her best, and thou concealing most dost hide the best. Come, doff this mantle. Be thy own fair self.

Maid. For a fellow of no consistency, like thee? Why, a moment ago thou swarest I were she and she were I, and didst hunger equally for her beauty thou didst see and mine thou knewest not. Why, thou art an idle fellow, I'm sure, with naught to do save to balance the charms of rival damsels and then be false to both. I wish I had thee in the vineyards once. I'd train thee.

Cal. How wouldst thou train me?

Maid. Thou shouldst carry my basket all day, and at quitting time—

Cal. Well, at quitting time?

Maid. Well, and if thou wert good mayhap I'd hold a grape between my lips,—thus,—and wert thou hungry, why thou mightest steal it from me.

Cal. Like this? [*Taking it from her lips with his.*]

Maid. Aye, and like this! [*Kissing him.*] Why, if thou hadst no beard I'd think they were a girl's. 'Twas so I kissed thee—I forgot thee man.

Cal. But I do know thee woman—the sweetest, merriest, wholesomest piece of flesh my eyes did e'er yet rest on. Hear! 'Tis thy mistress calls.

[*Exit Maid.*]

Enter Praxiteles.

Prax. I've found a paragon.

Cal. And I another.

Prax. Hast thou, a Prince, been tampering with some noble lady's maid?

Cal. She knows me not a Prince, and I think her some Princess in disguise.

Prax. Then must my paragon be the lady's maid, and, being so, Princess or maid, she hath been pledged thy bride.

Cal. Princess or maid, I'll take her for my bride.

Enter the Mistress and maid.

Prax. Thou'lt come to-morrow, fair dame?

Mistress. Aye! Twice I'll come, so thou must haste thy clay, to fix my likeness ere I speed away.

Curtain.

Act 4. — Scene 2.

Ante-room of Praxiteles.

(Two days later.)

Callias and the Maid.

Cal. 'Tis the last day, fair girl.

Maid. Aye, we are well quit of a hard three days' sufferance done for the good of Greece.

Cal. What! Hast thou found no pleasure with me?

Maid. Thou doest to pass one's time with when one cannot have thy master.

Cal. And dost thou still think me the sculptor's man?

Maid. Am I a fool, to bandy kisses with a Prince?

Cal. Nay, but I am the Prince.

Maid. Then thou art not for me. Thou'rt sworn to wed my better.

Cal. Aye, curses on it! 'Twill be a long sufferance of wedlock, done for the good of Greece.

Enter Praxiteles and Mistress.

Prax. Then we must part to-day?

Mistress. Yes, for great duties call me hence.

Prax. How shall we meet, and when?

Mistress. When all thy work is done, and bravely done — crowned by thy Prince, approvèd by the State, hailed great by critics and acclaimed by men — when the day comes that statue leaves these walls I will be here to bid it sweet farewell.

Prax. And thou wilt show to me earth's greatest work, the face I dream, set on a form so fair?

Mistress. And thou wilt give to me thy greatest work?

Cal. And I will give myself to thee, sweet bride.

Mistress. How shall I prove myself?

Prax. I'd know that form among ten thousand.

Mistress. Nay! I must have some pledge.

Prax. Well, cut off from my garment here a piece, and bear it with thee.

Mistress. Some tricksome maid will match it.

Prax. Well, here's a proof! [*Strikes off with a hammer the little finger of a statue.*] Some artist great may match that finger's shape — not art itself can fit it to such fracture.

Mistress. Thou hast ruined a beautiful thing.

Prax. Why, her whole form's not worth thy little finger, and thy little finger is worth her whole form.

Maid. Break it in half, and give me my guerdon.

Cal. What wilt thou claim?

Maid. If I were to claim thy promises 'twould take all the fingers in the world to carry them.

Mistress. Will you pardon us a moment, fair sirs, while we robe ourselves for the street?

[*Exeunt Mistress and maid to Studio.*]

Prax. [*Clapping his hands for Althea.*] Go seek the dames, good Althea. Tell them if they live far the dusk will fall and find them all belated in the throng. We'll see them safely through the brawling crowd, but leave them free at last to find their homes — unknown.

[*Exit Althea.*]

Cal. We'll tell them so, but I shall follow close and find the covert where such game doth hide.

Enter Althea.

Alt. I find them not, good Sirs! They're surely gone.

[*Exeunt Callias and Praxiteles in haste.*]

Curtain.

Act 5. — Scene 1.

Studio of Praxiteles.

Praxiteles is seen working on his statue.

Prax. 'Tis almost done! How oft before I've said that self-same thing and found it false. Ever the finish is a thing beyond; yet State and people call and say my art is slow. The critics say I'm old — my nerveless hand hath lost its youthful skill. That youthful hand perhaps had dashed in haste some striking image off — some effigy of things that move and live. My older hand follows the guidance of an older thought to a greater work than youth's. Some new perfection leads me ever on. This must not be an effigy of things that are, but art's true dream of things that ought to be. Note here these breasts of snow — these perfect orbs — pure as Diana's are and just as chaste. They're perfect! Aye, too pure. So pure they're thoughtless. Men will applaud and women call them fair; art will approve their perfect measurement; but I shall find them wanting. They're too unruffled. Never a pang hath made them heave in pain. No lover made them pant in ecstasy.

Here on the perfect curve of this left breast I'll print a wayward dimple.

Enter Eugia.

Eug. There are visitors, master.

Prax. Who?

Eug. The Prince, and the great gentlemen Scaurus and Memmius.

Prax. Go bid them enter.

Enter Callias, Scaurus, and Memmius.

Cal. Good master, to me thou hast been most indulgent. From the first conception of thy plan to thy model's choosing, and through all the modelling and roughing of thy work, thou hast made me an admiring associate. Would I could have served, as well as admired. But these gentlemen, who bear before the public many cares of state, know only by my rapturous report of how thou farest on a nation's work. To tell the honest truth, men deem thy choice fantastic and me a servile flat-

terer. Thou hast cultured me by long usage to the fashion of thy scheme—canst thou not tell these sober men in sober words what sober meaning thy strange image bears?

Mem. 'Tis true that when the State commissioned thee it gave thee un-taxed license—set thee free to choose thy will and work it. Now that thy scheme grows ripe the uncultured ones do doubt thy sober meaning.

Scau. Aye! An hermaphrodite seems a fit image for some public bath, or fitter yet to grace some winding stair leading from banquet-hall of easy dames to lust's soft couch above—a harlot's beckon to a brute's desire. But what does it mean to Greece?

Prax. Now damned be every brute whose prurient thought mixes lust's mire with high art's purest dream! To the foul all things are foul, while nature's pure stand in heaven's image—naked, unashamed. Go gaze on beauty with your hungry eyes till horns start from your foreheads! Go mate with brutes till your feet be cloven and wool shall line your thighs! Explain! Explain! Do the sibyls explain the oracles? Am I to kneel for a lifetime and worship at the feet of art, and fashion forth so shallow an oracle in stone that ye can fathom it at a glance? My work shall speak for itself. If your dumb ears cannot hear, go strain to hear Jove's thunder. My work shall show for itself. If your eyes cannot reach so high, go bend o'er some pool in the gutter and see your own image there. I've naught to say.

Cal. But, friend, the State—they're envoys of the State!

Prax. I care not for the State! My art's my own. When the work's done—if 'tis done—and the State accept, then, when it crowns our proud Acropolis, let Greece look on and wonder. Then let it marvel, criticize, complain. Till then my work's my own! I am the master here!

[*Exeunt Scaurus and Memmius in anger and dismay.*]

Cal. I was wrong to bring them here.

Prax. Nay, thou wert right. 'Tis only the sons of Kings can be Princes. Neither age, wisdom, nor culture give the true grace of rule. Oh! if I were a Prince I should offend my people all. Those who are born to the purple drink in sweet courtesy as the purple grape sweet wine. I, who am a subject, can ill brook to be questioned, criticized, commanded. And thou art ever commanded by a thousand carping, silly tongues, which, proffering praise and service, do subtly damn and chide. And thou acceptest it all as homage, and renderest them all the more thy slaves the more they think that they are ruling thee.

Cal. 'Tis not the King who rules. Great men like thee do rule through Kings when King and man agree.

Callias and Praxiteles clasp each others' hands. Then Callias seats himself and Praxiteles resumes work on his statue.

Prax. Apollo was a man; yet hast thou seen his face glow in soft beauty like some woman fair, and soft and round his limbs—a girlish grace. Diana was a nymph; and yet her brow firm with decision, while her sinews strained show forth a man's stout purpose.

If my hand's purpose fail not I shall show one exquisite form, of male and female blent, so shrewdly mixed no scrutiny can see which doth o'erbalance the other.

Cal. But e'en Apollo hath not breasts like these.

Prax. Nay! But the first man had, and men even now own the dwarfed organ whose high function's lost.

Cal. I see the manhood in those wiry arms.

Prax. Why, those are woman's—perfect and the best—the true arms of my model; arms that show effort and strength and patient work and skill. I never dreamed to see so fair a form till fate had set me on some mount, unseen, where fauns and dryads, unknowing of man's gaze, sported and gamboled through long moonlit hours. Oh! I am surfeited with dull round limbs—the flabby flesh of pampered idleness.

Cal. And yet thou girdlest close thy sexless form. Why, Greece is all agog to see how art's latest ideal shall be a monster and yet useful and beautiful.

Prax. Nature doth minister with organs strange to needs and uses high. Art would commend such use to man, yet rate the organ lower than the use. I aim to mould a truth, yet drape it so that eyes must strain to make its outlines clear, and seeking long shall find more truths than one.

Go! Rest in peace! Let critics carp and the dull throng protest; Greece and my Prince shall have the artist's best.

[*Exit Callias.*]

Eug. Thy day goes fast, my master. Shall I not refuse thee to all comers?

Prax. Aye, to all, to all! They try my patience when they mean the best.

Eugia seats herself in the far corner at her table, and Praxiteles resumes work on his statue.

Prax. See here, Eugia, look upon this breast. 'Tis round, too round—too round and smooth. I told the Prince I'd put a dimple on it—a wayward dimple. Would that be art—merely to break the outline of a curve, for effect, and not for meaning? Nay, it shall have a thought! Not a mere flesh-mark, born in nature's sport, but the first impress left by nature's stress on the young heart's fleshly shield. I'll put a dainty dimple on this breast, as if some young love flying by had flecked it with his wing.

Praxiteles works in silence for a few moments, then bends his face closer to the statue and starts back in anger and dismay.

Why, here's a spot—a dull, red, obvious stain! A flaw on purity! A footstep hence 'tis scarcely visible. A yellow bead not half so big as purity's first tear at purity's first mischance. 'Tis only skin deep! The scalpel's touch will bid it gone forever.

Works again in silence for a few moments.

It will not out! Each added touch doth but make wide the stain. The surface show was but a guide-point to the evil's seat. If I could stop but here this hollow sweet should be the impress of a Cupid's kiss. Young love should not skim by with flecking wing, but pause and press his lips to this bosom fair. Art cannot pause; it must go on to art's supreme decree. Love doth not stop with love's first kiss, but quaffs what erst it sipped. I must go deeper!

From first love's dimple and from Cupid's kiss I must carve inward to that deeper print which woman's passion moulds to woman's pain.

Praxiteles works again in silence.

How fair it was at first. Why was I not content with surface beauty? All beauty is outside, like the bubble's show, and impious the hand which pricks that bubble's film. Earth, air, and sea and sky, and the human form divine hide unseen horrors.

Eugia, come! See! I had moulded a perfect curve, and, pricking perfection, have brought to light a scar, a wound, a flaw.

Ages unnumbered hence ten million lives shed their blanched skeletons on ocean's bed to form that marble which earth's later pangs have heaved on Græcia's peaks. A few, sin-born, carried their foulness with them to their tomb for me to resurrect. But, being dead, their foulness died out with them. Death's a boon to pain, disease, and guilt. Life's a plague when its fair surface hides the pregnant seeds of future woe and pain.

How fair my wife, Velina! She was beauty's self in color, curve, and mould; yet deep within a pregnant seed of earth's worst human fruit. I pitied her at first. That is, when, bridehood past, she mothered that warped, distorted imp of pain. And then, as she grew beautiful and he groaned more, my pity turned to hate. I hated her that I, a lover of true form, should father on such beauty so hideous a form.

Oh, I was wrong, Eugia! 'Twas not her fault! Ages ago some foul progenitor drank in that poison which hath ceaseless flowed through countless veins to hers. She showed it not, yet poured its essence out into that cup which she and I did mould.

If I am wroth with this cold marble whose ancestral stain the chisel's point shall purge, how shall I not be wroth with stains that propagate from age to age, and soil life's current through unending years?

Eugia rests her hand on his shoulder, and stands, leaning on him. They gaze on the statue, oblivious of anything strange in their proximity. Eugia resumes her seat and Praxiteles again works.

Prax. See! 'Tis done! No stain is left! Only a deeper dent of white remains—a nest for loves to sleep in. A happy thought! 'Twill win the world's applause. "Why hath he done it?" asks the gaping crowd. A young love's wing—a Cupid's kiss—a lover's elbow—a hundred reasons equally apt and true, and all new steps to fame. But I—I in my heart shall ever recognize this subterfuge of art. A trick of skill to shape a virtue from a stain and flaw.

I need not blush. I made the statue, not the stain. But ah! woe's me! I made a living form, more stained than this, which death alone could mend.

Eugia! Eugia! Where is my Anteros? What? Here in the studio? I had forgot it. Hide it! Nay, have it moved out to the rubbish heap! Keep the doors locked to the waste room! Oh, if men could only see the beginnings of life how they would despise the end! Let no prying eyes see my blunders, my failures—my soulless forms. Judge me by finished work, and when I die let my crude firstlings all in darkness lie.

Curtain.

Act 5.—Scene 2.

The Fountain of Salmacis.

Diogenes is seated in his tub at the side of the square. Marcia and Flora, veiled and in the robes borrowed by Eugia and Nyctelia, are chaffering at a market stall.
Laco stands behind them holding a hamper.

Enter Callias and Praxiteles.

Cal. By all the gods, we are in luck! The heavens have fallen, and Venus and Luna have dropped clean into the market-place!

Prax. Why, what seest thou?

Cal. What see I? Why, our nymphs of the studio. I will to them at once.

Prax. What! And have them fly, like Diana from Actæon?

Cal. Diana did not fly.

Prax. Aye! But Actæon would have been better off had either of them flown.

Cal. See! Here's their man! I will inveigle him. Prithee, good fellow, thy mistress is a great lady, I trow.

Laco. Nay, my mistress is a likelier wench than she.

Cal. Than who?

Laco. Than my mistress.

Cal. How can thy mistress be a likelier wench than thy mistress?

Laco. Why, because the mistress who serves me is a likelier wench than the mistress I serve.

Cal. But the mistress thou servest, then—is she a great lady?

Laco. There be those who think so.

Cal. Aye, and there must be some who know. Thou and her maid there—do ye not know whether she is a great lady?

Laco. I and her maid? Why, we know nothing in common.

Cal. Well, dost thou know something out of the common, then? Tell me, which of them is thy mistress—the matron or the maid?

Laco. As I'm a man, no maid is my mistress.

Cal. To Styx with thy mistress, fellow! Come to the point. There be two ladies there, both veiled. Is it the stately one, in the fine robe, whom thou servest, or is it the smaller one who is the greater?

Laco. How can the smaller one be the greater? Nay, flout me not! If thou wilt befuddle me with vain questions and trip me up with ambiguities I must fall. I am a plain man—speak to me plainly.

Cal. Plainly, then, are these ladies what they seem, or is it a masquerade they play? Doth the smaller one, and more plainly robed, serve the taller, and is the taller a great lady? Are they what they seem?

Laco. Plainly, then, the taller one shineth coldly like an icicle on a gutter, but I think a stray moonbeam would melt her; and the smaller one doth act as sentry to my lady's virtue, but is oft absent from her post. Forsooth, so near as I can understand it, though they seem what they are, they are not what they seem. If thou wouldst know more of them go pour thy blandishments into their own ears—mayhap they may understand thee better than I.

Prax. [*Slipping a coin into his hand.*] Dost thou understand that?

Laco. Aye! It hath a broad meaning and I will answer thee broadly, yet shalt thou believe the truth less than the falsehood. The taller one is a lady of position, and the shorter her servant. The taller one is considered great, and, like all women, doth consider herself beautiful. The shorter one doth think herself greater and more beautiful than the mistress she serves. The great lady had set her heart on being the model for the great new statue of Greece, and the follower had set her heart on being a day first and so beating her mistress. But their robes, on which their beauty mainly depended, did both come late and at the same time from the seamstress, and since then they have haunted the public square in hope their overlate charms might reverse a too early decision.

Cal. [*Apart, to Praxiteles.*] Nay! 'Tis an idle tale. 'Tis they, themselves. Let us accost them.

Prax. [*To Marcia.*] At last! Ah! thou mayst veil as closely as thou wilt, thou dost not hide thy form.

Marcia. 'Tis a great praise to be so admired of so great an artist.

Prax. Thou dost acknowledge me, then? Wilt thou not offer me a finger in proof of thine own self?

Marcia. A finger? Nay, I will offer nothing to one who wants so little of me. [*She turns away.*]

Cal. [*To Flora.*] Ah, saucy one! So thou playest the shy and the demure. Wilt thou give me a finger now in pledge of the whole hand thou gavest me many times?

Flora. A finger? A hand? I gave thee neither. What am I that a Prince should ask my hand?

Cal. So now thou agreeest I am a Prince. Which art thou now, the mistress or the maid?

Flora. Couldst thou tell if thou sawest my face?

Prax. [*To Marcia.*] Wilt thou not at last loosen that veil which hides those long-sought charms? Such form betokens youth and all youth's grace; it tells of soul, and soul doth show in face.

Marcia and Flora unveil, disclosing painted, old, and ugly faces. Callias and Praxiteles start in disgust and dismay, and rush together from the scene. Diogenes, who has been a spectator, holds up both hands to heaven in appeal at the weaknesses of the great.

Curtain.

Act 5.—Scene 3.

Studio of Praxiteles.

The room has been rearranged, the work-benches and tools and the table of Eugia have been removed, the busts and statues have been ranged in a semi-circle, and the new statue of Greece has a position of honor. Curtain rises on Praxiteles, who has seated himself on the base of his statue, in complete prostration and disgust. Grouped near him are Callias, Cleon, and Lucius. Diogenes stands at one side of the scene, bending over the Wounded Anteros, which Eugia has half concealed with a drapery. Menas and Althea guard the door.

Cal. Thou hast had a great triumph, master.

Cleon. Yes, greater than thou thinkest. In your presence—before the master of the State and the master of art—comment and criticism have been dumb. None dared to risk decisive speech till authority had set his seal. But Lucius and I, who crept around quietly through the skirts of the crowd, heard praise, and praise only.

Prax. Then is my work a failure. If it be praised by all to-day, it will be forgotten by all to-morrow.

Diog. But I heard many a sarcasm. If blame will make your statue live, then will it live for aye.

Prax. Blame! How dare they? What did they find to blame?

Diog. They blamed because they found not what they sought. Some sought a man and found a woman—some suspected a maid and discerned a youth—and most hungered for a monster. Thou gavest neither youth, maid, nor monster, and the crowd is too cold to warm marble into poetic fire at one sitting.

Prax. At one sitting? Why, all I have dreamed of Greece from her cradle to her grave is compressed in that stone. To-day cannot understand it; nay, nor to-morrow, nor many to-morrows. Idiots! to think they can fathom at a glance what it has taken the eyes of my soul a lifetime to decipher.

Diog. Aye! But there is a deeper condemnation. Men may look on greatness and not understand it, but if it be really great should not they recognize the greatness? I have heard that in the sands of Egypt there are statues hideous of dull red stone which none admire, none understand—which all approach with awe. On their thick lips and smoothed

foreheads sits the majesty of a buried past. On countless faces the same weird smile taunts one with secrets old and silence kept.

But at thy feast, O sculptor, I saw many who passed the banquet-board and picked up the crumbs from the floor. These nymphs and odalisques perplexed them strangely. Yet were there some sage critics. There was even one who discerned enough to know Triton by his horn.

Cal. Nay, sage, thou railest wildly. It was not for these our sculptor carved, but for time. Is it any wonder that the popular throng, crowded hastily among statues and busts, do not at once pick out art's choicest marvels? Who could single out Helen at a glance were she bared in the public bath? And thou, O cynic, who would pick thee out from the beggars of the market-place as a great philosopher if it were not for thy tub? Here and at the fountain's rim thy railings sound like the echoes of a street brawl. Writ down in gold, and pondered on when we are dead, they shall read like the wise proverbs of some mouthpiece of the gods.

Crowded in here, with marble slaves and nymphs and wantons, Greece rises not, but falls down to their level. Yon face which smiles behind our Greece's elbow calls up so plain a girl I knew in flesh that I forget this new-born purity in the sense of a treasured guilt.

Take this away from narrow walls—from lowly roof—from mean surroundings. Set it aloft on some black, beetling crag. The Parthenon's gold behind—above, below, heaven's resplendent arch, the earth's broad plain. And then, let Greece stand off and reverently gaze, while, ages hence, nations unborn shall rally at its base, gathering the scattered culture of a world round culture's oldest throne.

Diog. But if the sculptor carve for time alone, where is his meed to-day? Nations unborn fill up no wine-jars, nor scatter gold-pieces, nor add to the lip's praise the lip's warmth.

Cal. Forsooth, thou art a wise sage, after all, and though age may have cooled thy blood it hath left thee wisdom to gauge the warmth of other men's veins. If my own wits work not at random, I surmise that it is not the public silence nor applause, nor too discriminating praise nor stupid censure which dismay our host. Methinks it is the lack of a certain feminine reward which doth outweigh the State's acceptance and the nation's praise.

Prax. Aye, it may be that. The day hath almost gone, and she who inspired the work hath not yet met our gaze. I felt sure this day she would appear before, above them all, in robes celestial and with smile so sweet all should acclaim her beauty.

And thou, my Prince! Thou shouldst seat Greece's model on Greece's throne, and wear her next thy heart.

Eugia! Why, where's Eugia? I bethink me now, that among all

these senators and stately dames I have scarce once seen Eugia. Nay, I am so perplexed I doubt if I have seen her at all. I fear that, in expecting one who came not, I have neglected one whose daily ministries have made me what I am.

Ho! Althea! Where's thy daughter?

Alt. She waits in the ante-room, master. When the great and the rich come together in state, then should humble folk remember that they are humble.

Prax. Go bid her enter.

Eugia and Nyctelia enter, the latter keeping unseen in the background behind Althea, while Eugia approaches.

I have missed thee to-day, Eugia, yet did not know I missed thee. Something was wrong all day, I knew not what. And all day long I waited one who came not. Thou! Didst thou scan the throng? Thy keener sense might have discerned upon the lintel's edge her to whom I was blind.

Eug. If thou couldst not feel her near, how could I tell her presence?

Cal. [*Dragging Nyctelia to the front.*] Well, here's her hand-maid! I'd know that face among a thousand. A pretty masquerade! A peasant! A gatherer of grapes! A great lady, a Princess, who has been struggling as hard to roughen her hands and tan her skin as most dames do to smooth and whiten theirs. And in trying to disguise the Princess she has only added to royal grace such a maidenly archness as would make any woman royal.

But here! We have been tricked once, sculptor; let us again demand the pledge. Hast thou a finger?

Nyct. Why? Hast thou a ring to put on it?

Cal. Nay, girl! A marble finger!

Nyct. There be some who would not crave marble when flesh were proffered.

Cal. But in this case marble is the test of flesh. If thou dost produce a marble finger then will I swear thou art the sweetest, merriest wench mine eyes have ever set on.

Nyct. Then thou canst not tell me for a merry wench by my own speech nor face, but must need a marble finger to swear by! Well, if that be my proof of value, behold!

Nyctelia produces a marble finger. Callias seizes it, throws it on the floor, and showers tokens of transport and delight on Nyctelia.

Prax. Why, here's some joke! This is a child's first finger, and a whole one. It should be the fragment of a woman's fourth.

Cal. [*Drawing away from Nyctelia.*] What! Thou saucy fraud! Dost thou cheat me with the semblance of a face?

Nyct. [*Pretending to sulk.*] Canst thou not tell whether I am merry and to thy taste unless thou knowest if my face be mine own or some other's? A woman's, and the fourth! Well, how will this do?

Prax. [*Fitting the fragment to a mutilated hand.*] It fits to the finest fracture.

Cal. Now art thou the very queen of sports. I would rather be tantalized by thee than surfeited by beauty's queen.

Prax. But thy mistress! Thy mistress!

Nyct. Didst thou not see her here to-day? Why, I saw her! I could tell that sweep of the arm—that droop of the shoulder—that stately carriage—that graceful poise—were she uniformed like the vestals and had only her form to distinguish her. Why, she stood there,—just where Eugia stands now,—and once she raised her arm, so [*placing Eugia's in position*], and leaned her head this way, and raised her foot thus, and I could have sworn it was Greece's self, she looked so like yon statue—just as Eugia looks now!

Prax. By heaven, it is the same! Give me thy living hand and I will ask no more.

Eug. Nay! I will certify myself, so no shadow of a doubt shall stay. [*She produces the remaining fragment of a finger.*]

Prax. Eugia! Eugia! And must I part with thee, just as I know thy worth? But thou shalt go where thou dost belong. And I, ungrateful. Who better than my Prince deserves my best gift, and who better than my hand-maid deserves my Prince?

Cal. [*Coming with princely gallantry to Eugia.*] Fair lady, better far a living Greece than the fairest she that ever gleamed in stone. The Kings and the people; the people and the Kings—these have made Greece what she is. Perchance if we mingle the blood of King and people our heir may make Greece what she ought to be. People, King, State, and sculptor have sworn a solemn pact. She who was found meet for the State's model was meet for the Prince's bride. I ratify that pact.

The men of Greece are mothered by its women. No fairer maid did ever spring from out the people's loins. So fair a maid should be a fairer mother, and she who hath given the State its stone exemplar should give it also a living King. So fair thou art, thou mightest be vile and cruel. But I have seen thee long—meek and self-effacing, ever watchful and ready, ever tender, thoughtful, and true. Those only who serve well reach the high grace of rule. Come, then, my bride. Be as true to me as thou hast been to thyself, and thy master and all Greece shall be loyal and true to thee.

Eug. [*Drawing gently away from the Prince.*] But, masters, there was another part to the pact. She who became the State's model was to re-

ceive the sculptor's greatest work. If I have served truly, am not I worth the whole meed?

Prax. Worth it? Aye, and far more! My greatest work?

Diog. Aye, sculptor! Thy greatest work! Athens hath long had its own opinion,—that is, its hundred or more opinions,—but all desire the master's seal on his greatest work—desire it mostly so they can scratch it off. Is it the Antinous? or the Dancing Girl? or the Aphrodite? Methinks if I were to choose I should pause long over the Satyr; but I ween I would stop at last by this Wounded Anteros. It hath a touch of failure about it, and that touch reveals the sculptor's highest bound.

Cleon. But why not the hermaphrodite?

Diog. But how can the sculptor give to the model what the State hath paid for in gold? Or perhaps, like other women, it is the gold she hath wrought for all along. Give the State its statue, the sculptor his fame, and her the gold.

Eug. [*Indignantly.*] Nay! I claim the pact. I was promised the sculptor's greatest work.

Diog. Do thou decide, then. See, I will place this laurel crown upon their heads, and where thou biddest it stay that shall be thine.

He places it on the heads of the various statues, till finally it rests on the hermaphrodite.

She claims this fairest, not because it mirrors forth the sculptor's best, but her own fairness.

Prax. My best! Ah, would it were! It is my longest, latest labor—my highest striving—the sweetest effort of my art and love. My greatest work? Nay! I shall give thee better far than that. This is my greatest work—to show me true to art and mine own true self!

He seizes a hammer, and with one blow strikes off the statue's head. The Prince seizes him, Eugia and Nyctelia rush into each others' arms in affright, and Diogenes and others gather round Praxiteles and the Prince.

Prax. Now, when I am most sane, ye sane folk think me mad. See ye! It was, indeed, a great work. Of the beauties found there by the throng few did exist save in their own distorted minds. Of the blemishes they condemned as many perhaps as the beauties, and these come mostly from their jealous hearts. But there was one thing there I knew, and I alone. A trick, a fraud, a subterfuge of art! Had it been an open blemish I could have stood men's blame. But to live, and have that live after me with its sleek, white hypocrisy—that were, indeed, too much.

Cal. I am the Prince here—I decide this fate. Greater than art and work is he who makes the one and serves the other. Greatest of all is he who, weighing each, weighs his own value in the scale 'gainst both. Eugia, thou hast thy prize! The pact affirmed—the State approved—the Prince decides.

The man's his greatest work!

Callias places Eugia in the sculptor's arms, Diogenes places the laurel crown upon his head, and the Prince clasps Nyctelia in his arms.

Curtain.

finis.

